

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 000164

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/AGS, EUR/PRA, NP/ECNP, INR/SPM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2015

TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR URGES NEW INTERIOR MINISTER TO HALT
SALE OF SNIPER RIFLES TO IRAN

REF: A. (A) STATE 9770

[1](#)B. (B) VIENNA 37 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR W.L. LYONS BROWN. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: In his first meeting with new Interior Minister Liese Prokop on January 18, the Ambassador praised the excellent cooperation the U.S. has enjoyed with the Ministry on law enforcement, anti-terrorism, and Embassy security issues. He explained in detail U.S. concerns regarding Austria's sale of sniper rifles to Iran and warned of the consequences to the Austrian government and to the Austrian producer if further shipments are completed. Though it was clear she didn't know the issue well, Minister Prokop agreed that the rifle sale required a high-level, inter-ministerial review in the Austrian government and promised that she would initiate discussion with the highest levels of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chancellery. The Ambassador was accompanied by the DCM and the Political-Multilateral section chief. Chef-de-cabinet Philipp Ita sat in with the Minister. End summary.

[1](#)2. (S) In his introductory call on Minister Prokop, who assumed office in mid-December following the surprise resignation of Ernst Strasser, the Ambassador first stressed the good news. He noted several recent successful U.S.-Austrian cooperative ventures, including a joint cocaine sting operation, the pending extraditions of several terrorist suspects, and an operation to halt the transfer of night vision goggles to Iran. He thanked Prokop for the Ministry's attention to the security of the U.S. facilities and personnel in Austria. The Ambassador noted U.S. appreciation for the Austrians' willingness to extend the tours of the four police trainers working with the Iraqi police academy in Jordan, and for Austria's donations of police equipment to Iraq. He observed that we hoped that Prokop would encourage her government to provide personnel to assist in the stabilization effort in Afghanistan. He mentioned continued U.S. interest in the Salzburg Forum, in which European regional interior ministers, led by former Interior Minister Strasser, had cooperated on law enforcement issues. The Ambassador also congratulated Prokop for Austria's assistance to victims of the East Asia tsunami, particularly in Sri Lanka. He told the Minister that her predecessor's periodic working visits to the U.S. had been enormously valuable to both partners and said we hoped she would come to the U.S. to meet with her colleagues and counterparts at an appropriate time (i.e., after new Foreign Minister Plassnic has met with the incoming Secretary). Minister Prokop said that she was on the best of terms with her predecessor, appreciated Strasser's his excellent work in the international sphere, and intended to continue forward in the same direction. She hoped to work closely with the U.S., in particular in the field of anti-corruption, a central theme in Austria's 2006 EU presidency.

[1](#)3. (S) Turning to a subject he said he regretted had to be raised, the Ambassador outlined the U.S.'s serious objections to Austria's past and proposed sales of Steyr-Mannlicher sniper rifles to Iran. After briefing her on past's previous efforts to persuade MFA and Interior Ministry officials not to permit the sales, he described the capabilities of the powerful rifles, noting they were lethal military equipment unsuitable for border policing. Drawing on ref (a), he explained the possibility of U.S. sanctions against the Austrian government or the manufacturer. The ambassador pulled no punches in outlining the negative consequences to U.S.-Austrian relations should these weapons find their way into Iraq. Handing the minister a nonpaper (ref a), he urged her to provide information concerning the number and the serial numbers of the weapons already shipped to Iran, to notify us regarding the status of the licenses for the pending shipments, and to stop any future shipments of these rifles to Iran.

[1](#)4. (S) Although she did not appear well briefed on the subject (her office was aware that the Ambassador would raise the topic), Minister Prokop said she could see the sniper sales issue was a big, big problem. She noted that the export license request for the first shipment had been vetted through the MFA legal and export bureaucracy, but said she understood U.S. security concerns and would take up the issue

with the Foreign Ministry, perhaps with the Foreign Minister herself as well as the Chancellor,s office. She herself did not know the status of the pending license requests but would find out. To start discussions with the MFA, the minister promised to forward a copy of the nonpaper to MFA General Secretary Kyrle for comment. The Ambassador said that he

SIPDIS

would call Kyrle (whom he had demarched January 7 on this subject, per ref b) and let him know the paper was coming. (Note: in Kyrle,s absence, the Ambassador talked later that day to Deputy Secretary General Hans Winkler.)

15. (S) Comment: Shortly after the Ambassador,s call on the Minister, post heard from MFA (Ambassador Winkler) and Interior Ministry officials (Ita and BVT head Gert Polli) on the sniper rifles issue. Although it now appears probable that the November shipment may have been smaller than we had first heard -- some 630 rifles vice 800) we are pressing for authoritative confirmation of this figure as well as an official high-level clarification of the status of the second and third shipments. End comment.
Brown